

Micheaux Black Heritage Stamp Issued June 22

On June 22, 2010, in New York City, the USPS issued a 44¢ Oscar Micheaux stamp. The 33rd stamp in the Black Heritage series honors a pioneering filmmaker who wrote, directed, produced, and distributed more than 40 movies during the first half of the 20th century.

An ambitious, larger-than-life figure, Micheaux thrived at a time when African-American filmmakers were rare, venues for their work were scarce, and support from the industry did not exist. His entrepreneurial spirit and independent vision continue to inspire new generations of filmmakers and artists. According to Wikipedia, “Micheaux was born near Metropolis, Illinois and grew up in Great Bend, Kansas, one of eleven children of former slaves. As a young boy, he shined shoes and worked as a porter on the railway. As a young man, he very successfully homesteaded a farm in an all-white area of South Dakota, where he began writing stories. Micheaux overcame many of the racist attitudes and restrictions on African-American publishers and authors by forming his own publishing company to sell his books door-to-door.

“The advent of the motion picture industry intrigued him as a vehicle to tell his stories. He formed his own movie production company and, in 1919, became the first African-American to make a film...*The Homesteader*...based on his novel of the same name. He used autobiographical elements in *The Exile*, his first feature film with sound, in which the central character leaves Chicago to buy and operate a ranch in South Dakota. In 1924, his film, *Body and Soul*, introduced the movie-going public to Paul Robeson.”



The stamp features a stylized portrait of Oscar Micheaux by artist Gary Kelley of Cedar Falls, Iowa. The artwork is based on one of the few surviving photographs of Micheaux, a portrait that appeared in his 1913 novel, *The Conquest*. Stamp designer Derry Noyes incorporated the artwork into his stamp design.

Noyes also was the Art Director and Typographer for the stamp. The Engraver credit was assigned to Trident and the Modeler credit to Avery Dennison, which also printed the stamps using a gravure process.

A total of 80 million pressure sensitive adhesive (PSA) stamps were printed in per panes of 20 stamps each. Colors used to print the stamps were cyan, magenta, yellow and black. Plate numbers in the four corners of each pane consist of the letter “V” to identify Avery Dennison as the printer followed by four single digits, one for each print color.

The header states “BLACK HERITAGE 33rd IN A SERIES”. The back of each stamp provides a short paragraph about Micheaux.

To obtain First Day cancels, affix the Micheaux stamps to your covers and send them in an outer envelope to Oscar Micheaux Stamp, Postmaster, 421 Eighth Avenue, Room 2029B, New York, NY 10199-9998. All requests must be postmarked by August 23, 2010. You may also enclose another envelope with postage for return of your covers to protect them from damage or double cancelling in the mail.

USPS order numbers and prices are: 464900, pane of 20, \$8.80; 464961, First Day Cover, 82¢; 464991, Ceremony Program, \$6.95; 464993, Cancellation Keepsake, \$9.95.